

- ☑ Thank a veteran on Memorial Day
- ☑ First troops in war return for round two (back page)
- ☑ Childrens' party is tonight (back page)

LSS supports airlift from 'City of 100 Spires' to Iraq

by MSgt. Tom Allocco

Not every deployment in support of Iraqi Freedom is to a tent in a desert base. Two supply specialists learned that some overseas locations involve less hardship than others after they were assigned to one of the great tourist regions of Europe in April.

MSgt. Carla Letourneau and MSgt. Richard Greene of the 439th Logistics Support Squadron served for three weeks assisting an airlift out of Prague, Czech Republic. The Eastern European city, known as the City of One Hundred Spires for its many cathedrals, has been noted for its magnificent architecture and culture since medieval times.

When the 439th LSS was looking for two people to deploy overseas to support Iraqi Freedom from a location which was classified at that time, most people assumed it would be a life of bottled water and MREs.

"I didn't know how to pack, for warm or cold weather. I packed for everything, but I brought too much warm weather stuff. We thought we were going to the sand," Letourneau said. "I thought of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, all those places named 'stan'," Greene said. They only learned where they were going when handed their orders shortly before boarding a C-5 that flew directly from here to Prague. They went over with a team of C-5 maintainers from the 105th AW, Stewart ANGB, NY.

"Because of the situation, you thought the worse. Come to find out, one of the



PRAGUE IN SPRING - - When two Westover supply specialists deployed to Prague, they stayed in one of the oldest and most cultured cities in Europe, known as the City of 100 Spires for its centuries old architecture.

--photo by MSgt. Richard Greene

surprises was Prague and a totally different mission," Letourneau said. The two supply specialists conducted inventory and supplied parts and tools for maintainers during the C-5 and C-17 airlift from a Prague airport to Iraq.

The aircraft delivered Czech Army medical teams, supplies, equipment and vehicles to Iraq as that country's contribution to the growing humanitarian effort. The NATO ally sent field hospital workers to Afghanistan to treat civilians in 2002.

When the airlift started, Letourneau and Greene were the only two supply people, working with about 90 other Americans. Each took a 12-hour shift. The aerial porters and maintainers worked hard for on-time take-offs for the aircraft. The airport was guarded by Czech Army soldiers in desert camouflage uniforms, some armed with M-16s.

At the airport, the supply specialists met a Westover aircrew in the airlift. "It was nice to say welcome...have somebody from home station," Letourneau said.

The hours were long, but there was time to mix with the tourists in one of the great cities of Europe.

"A beautiful, beautiful city, no pavement, just all cobblestone, very old historical buildings, stucco and brick" Letourneau said. "The cathedrals are breathtaking," she said.

"There is just crystal everywhere. And it's sort of like stepping back in time. You reach some points in the city and you just go 'ahhh'," she said.

They toured a castle on a hill, once the domain of a King Ferdinand, king of Bohemia. They saw hundreds of hunting rifles, some with pearl in-lay, and antique blunderbusses. Coats of arms, armor suits for men and horses, shields and swords told

them they were walking in a realm with a long history.

They stayed at a three star hotel - The Diplomat - with features including a sauna and a go-cart track for guests. To get around the city there was a subway and also trolley cars on tracks with electric cables. The Vltava River is spanned by a series of historic bridges. Letourneau remembers the Charles Bridge with ornate religious figures, and a plaza where artists sold their wares and musicians played for coins.

"It's a very old city, with a lot of tradition. Everything is ornate," Greene said.

Prague is known for its crystal and deep dark red garnet jewelry. Tourists seek out crystal glasses, goblets, candle stick holders and figurines.

Letourneau was less impressed with the coffee. Their coffee is espresso or capuchino. We asked people to send us coffee," she said.

Ordering from Czech menus was also challenging. Greene was the butt of running jokes.

"I'd order beef stew and what would come would not be beef stew the way I know it. I'd keep waiting. I had problems until I memorized the menu," he said.

A highpoint of the deployment was Greene's promotion to master sergeant. His OIC gave him a BDU shirt with stripes and patches. Greene then spent hours wrestling with the hotel sewing kits sewing his nametag on his new shirt.

But the two supply specialists came home with no complaints. "Rich and I talked about how fortunate we were in the toss of the coin; where we could have gone and where we were, and we just smiled at each other and gave a high five," Letourneau said.

Westover greeting



USO volunteer Shirley Demers has a big hug for a 10th Special Forces support soldier returning home to Fort Carson, Col. from duty in northern Iraq.

-- photo by MSgt. W.C. Pope

First soldiers in war return for round two

by MSgt. Tom Allocco

Veterans of one of America's first military responses to the 9/11 attacks passed through the Westover Passenger Terminal recently for their second tour in the war against terrorism.

Soldiers of the 528th Special Operations Support Battalion stopped here while deploying from Fort Bragg, N.C. to the Iraqi Freedom AOR. Their job is to provide supply, engineering, maintenance and other support to special operations forces. Many of them are veterans of the deployment to the airbase dubbed "K-2" in Uzbekistan in support of the 10th Mountain Division in October, 2001, just weeks after the 9/11 terror attacks.

While the debris was still being shifted from the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, soldiers like fuels specialist SSgt. Ramon Albarran of Aguada, Puerto Rico were on their way to Uzbekistan in support of Task Force Dagger.

K-2 was a former Soviet air field. "There was nothing on the ground but three or four bunkers. We set up tents. C-17s brought in fuel in bladders," Albarran said.

Within days of 9/11, his unit received the "warning order" to be ready. "The first reaction was we were pretty much mad... we were ready to do what we had to do. Once we got on the ground over there, it never stopped. We were pumped until the day we left," he said.

They were in Uzbekistan for two months, followed by duty at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.

Albarran now expects to be in the Iraqi Freedom AOR for up to 90 days. "You feel kind of tired, you think back on what happened and the reasons we are going and the adrenalin starts pumping. And that's how everybody feels," the Fort Bragg soldier said.



(EDITOR'S NOTE: Security guidelines prohibit using last names of deploying reservists.)

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Family Support plans childrens' party today

A pajama party will take place tonight from 6-8 p.m. in the grassy area by the Family Support Center.

The Westover Fire Department will bring a fire engine to the party, together with Sparky the Dog and plastic fire hats. An inflatable gym will be featured, as well as refreshments and a clown with animal shaped balloons.

Parents may sign up their children (up to the age of 13) at the center by calling Ext. 3024.

Pat Stats

Served since Feb. 2, 2003
5,933 passengers --- 2,050 aircraft
21,303,519 pounds of cargo
Info from MSgt. Jim Garrity, 42APS

Meals
12,532 hot meals served
Box lunches: 4,917
Info from MSgt. David Beauregard, 439SVS

Fuel since Feb.1
13,493,724 gallons of JP-8
Info from Jim Maloney, Fuels

June 26 - Employer Appreciation Day

Reservist's name, rank and unit: _____

Reservist's home address: _____

Reservist's daytime telephone number: _____

Employer's name and title: _____

Employer's Social Security Number: _____

Employer's company name/address: _____

Lunch for employer: YES___ NO___ Lunch for reservist: YES___ NO___

I understand that I may nominate one person annually, and only an individual who is my supervisor, foreman, manager, etc.

Signature _____

(Falsification of information on this form can be punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.)

Return this form to:

439th Airlift Wing/ Public Affairs, 100 Lloyd St.,
Westover ARB, Mass. 01022-1825

Westover women's softball schedule

The Westover Women's Softball Team will play their full schedule the season at Szot Field, Chicopee. Players are wearing shirts purchased by the Air Force Association. Also supporting the softball team is the 439th Services Squadron which paid their league fees.

DAY	DATE	FIELD	TIME	VISITORS	HOME
Wednesday	28 May	Szot 1	6:45	Westover	Market Square
Friday	6 June	Szot 1	5:45	Pete's Dragon	Westover
Wednesday	11 Jun	Szot 2	5:45	Chazzy B'z	Westover
Wednesday	18 Jun	Szot 1	5:45	Dugout	Westover
Wednesday	25 Jun	Szot 1	7:00	Ludlow Tech	Westover
Wednesday	2 Jul	Szot 1	5:45	Westover	Pete's Dragon
Wednesday	9 Jul	Szot 1	7:00	Market Square	Westover
Wednesday	16 Jul	Szot 1	7:00	Westover	Chazzy B'z
PLAYOFFS	????				

Express-ions

